

**PRESS RELEASE**

**KENT AND CANTERBURY HOSPITAL: Temporary changes for some patients following Health Education England recommendation**

East Kent Hospitals is considering how it needs to respond to a forthcoming removal of some of its trainee doctors from the Kent and Canterbury Hospital (K&C) to ensure patients remain safe and well cared for and that staff are supported.

Health Education England (HEE) has confirmed that services at the K&C are safe now but this week requested that East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT), which runs the hospitals in Canterbury, Margate and Ashford, make changes due to a shortage of permanent consultant doctors who oversee and support junior doctor training.

HEE, the body that oversees doctor training, is recommending that 42 out of 76 trainees be moved to the Trust’s other two acute hospitals - the William Harvey Hospital, Ashford and Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital, Margate - to continue with their training.

The move is likely to result in temporary changes to some services for patients at the K&C in the next two to three months, particularly in emergency care, to ensure services remain safely staffed. In all, it is likely to affect up to 50 of the 900 people who attend the hospital each day.

Matthew Kershaw, Chief Executive of EKHUFT said: “As a teaching Trust, we are committed to providing high quality training and we will respond to any recommendations positively because we know that is best for both our junior doctors and for our patients.

“Keeping patients safe and properly looked after is our top priority. We know the hospital is safe now, but we are making careful plans for what we now have to do in the best interest of patients. “Staff have worked extremely hard over the last two years to improve how we care for patients, as recognised by the Care Quality Commission and recent decision to remove the Trust from quality special measures. We are taking temporary steps so that we can continue to provide safe, high quality care for our patients and improve the quality of our medical training.

“Over the next two to three months we will need to temporarily combine a limited number of services at the Kent and Canterbury with those at our hospitals at Ashford and Margate while we work on a sustainable solution. We are committed to making sure as many patients as possible can still be cared for in Canterbury.

“We would like to reassure all patients who are expecting to come into hospital shortly that their appointment or procedure will take place as usual.”

**Affected services**

The services affected are inpatient medical services, i.e. inpatient heart services, acute stroke services and some inpatient services for elderly patients with serious illness like pneumonia.

This does not affect the other services at the K&C. For example, its surgical services, chemotherapy services, renal, vascular and urology services, as well as all outpatient clinics, are not affected.

A small number of patients would no longer be brought to the K&C’s Urgent Care Centre as an emergency while the temporary change is in place. The majority of attendances at the centre are for minor injuries and illnesses, and these would not be affected. Complex trauma cases and many heart attack patients across Kent are already taken straight to the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, so will see no change.

More than 120 people currently attend the Urgent Care Centre every day. Under the temporary changes, approximately 30 people who attend by ambulance would be taken to the Emergency Departments and Ashford and Margate.

The Trust is working hard to minimise disruption to patients and their loved ones as much as possible. For example, a patient living in or around Canterbury who is taken by ambulance to Ashford or Margate initially would be transferred to the K&C as soon as possible for their continued care until they are ready to leave hospital.

**What happens now**

The changes will be temporary and will not be immediate, to allow time for the Trust to develop its plans and test them to make sure patients will be safe and well looked after.

The Trust is working with other health and social care organisations in east Kent, its staff, and patient and carer representatives, to ensure that any changes cause as little disruption as possible. It has commissioned an independent review of its plans to provide objective assurance that the proposed plans are robust and will address the implications for patient safety on all of the sites.

It will continue to recruit permanent doctors and update patients, the public and staff on its progress.

The Trust has written to all its inpatients at the K&C to reassure them and their families that there will be no immediate changes to their care following today’s announcement. The Trust will continue to update the public about what this will mean for patients before any changes are made.

The Trust will also ensure that its website carries the latest information for patients and members of the public at [www.ekhuft.nhs.uk](http://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk)